

**TESTIMONY**  
**of**  
**Janine R. Beauregard**  
**Before the Appropriations Committee**  
**of the**  
**Connecticut General Assembly**

**March 4, 2011**

Chairpersons Sen. Toni Harp and Rep. Toni Walker and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee my name is Janine Beauregard. I am here today to testify **in support of the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program and ask you to retain the line item funding for this essential program.**

Six years ago my grandfather's beginnings with Alzheimer's began – unbeknownst at the time, to my family and I. I am not sure if my grandfather, Walter Dow, was aware that changes in his ability to focus or remember things constituted a drastic change in his life ahead at the time, either.

I remember the family joking about the fact that he had lost his wedding ring while out on a boat with my uncle. We realize now, however, that was the beginning of the appearance of signs that Alzheimer's was beginning to affect his mind.

Two years ago, his condition worsened to the point where my grandmother worried that if she turned her back for a minute that he would disappear and not remember where his home was. As a result, my uncle took action and forced them to move from their independent home in Florida to be closer to our family. My grandparents then moved into an assisted living complex where their lives would begin to be monitored.

My grandmother is very independent and is able to care for herself. She has chosen to spend every waking hour possible as my grandfather's caregiver; sacrificing her independence to assist her life partner of 66 years. She has fed

him, changed him, and had many sleepless nights as he often thinks that midnight is morning and refused go to bed.

The past two years had been especially tough, but the past 9 months had really gone downhill. My grandfather's condition became such that he lost the ability for any speech, and had at least one fall per week where he could not remember how to get up. After a few months of this, in November, 2010, he was finally moved to a nursing home facility close to the assisted living complex. Day in and day out, my grandmother went to the nursing home and spent as many hours with him as the home allowed.

Finally, someone else could feed and change him, releasing much of the responsibility for my grandmother. But he did not understand the change, and resented anyone touching him. When he had his capacities, my grandfather was never a violent person – he was more like a big teddy bear. More or less, he raised me to the hard-working, confident woman I am today. However, with the onset of the disease, he became violent in a frenzy of confusion. For any of you who have ever seen the scene in the movie The Notebook in the nursing home where Ally is sedated after becoming frantic and panicked because she cannot remember Noah, that scene is very sad but accurate. He has hit nurses and assistants in this frenzy, and even at times my grandmother. For months, different medications have been tried to calm him down. Near the end, I don't even think he realized his body was moving and it was more of a seizure-like reflex. A few weeks ago, he was moved to a hospital and on Friday, February 18, 2011, he lost his battle with the disease and passed away.

His passing leaves me with many questions. Since, Alzheimer's disease is inter-generational, am I destined for the same fate? Especially since my significant other's grandfather also passed from the disease, will my children also succumb to it? Will my mother also suffer from it? What triggers the common gene in those with the disease? Will there ever be a cure so that I can stop fearing it?

I understand that the cost of the disease will be immense, and I implore you to consider Alzheimer's as an important agenda item. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time. If you have questions or concerns at a future date, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Janine R. Beauregard

Windsor, CT